

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A **Blood Pressure** Test

Proper technique is essential in accurate blood pressure measurement. Use the following to ensure you get the best measurement possible and learn how each factor can affect your blood pressure reading.

Go to the bathroom before having your blood pressure measured. Having a full bladder can change your blood pressure reading.

Sit quietly for five minutes. Sitting quietly for a short period of time can aid in bringing your blood pressure to its more consistent state. Movement can cause short-term rises in blood pressure.



Do not drink caffeine, alcohol or smoke 30 minutes prior to taking your blood pressure. These actions may cause a short-term rise in your blood pressure.

Sit up straight with both feet flat on the floor. Crossing legs can increase blood pressure. Slouching may elevate both systolic and diastolic levels.

Do not take blood pressure over clothing. Using the proper cuff size, wrap cuff snugly around upper right arm area, one inch above natural crease. The bladder of a loosely wrapped cuff will balloon and decrease the effective width causing an elevated reading. Taking blood pressure over clothing also may give you a falsely high reading.

Make certain upper right arm is at heart level with elbow slightly flexed, palm facing upwards on a flat surface with arm supported. If the arm is lower or higher than heart level, blood pressure could fluctuate as much as 10 mmHg.

You are prepared; inflate cuff. To measure your blood pressure, your doctor or nurse will use some type of a gauge, a stethoscope (or electronic sensor) and a blood pressure cuff. If he or she doesn't tell you what your blood pressure numbers are, you should ask.

Source: National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute



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